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PRESENTATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION

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IT IS A GREAT HONOUR TO BE GIVEN THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE, ON BEHALF OF THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR EAST TIMOR.

TRADITIONALLY, DIPLOMACY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL POLICY HAS BEEN LEFT TO AN ELITE GROUP OF POLITICIANS AND BUREAUCRATS. HOWEVER, THE EXPANSION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORTATION, OF WORLD TRADE AND ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE, HAS EXPANDED THE SCOPE OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

THESE SAME TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS NOW ENABLE ORDINARY CITIZENS AND THE MEDIA TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES THE SITUATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES, AND TO FORMULATE OPINIONS INDEPENDENT FROM THOSE OF THEIR GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS APPARATUS. HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER NON-GOVERNMENTAL BODIES ARE PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AS A RESULT.

SINCE THE INVASION AND OCCUPATION OF EAST TIMOR BY INDONESIA ON DECEMBER 7, 1975, THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF OPPRESSION AND THE ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON AN UNIMAGINABLE SCALE.

REGRETTABLY, THERE HAVE BEEN MANY COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES. BUT THE SHEER SCALE OF THE FORCE WITH WHICH INDONESIA HAS TRIED TO PACIFY THE INHABITANTS OF EAST TIMOR STANDS OUT. UP TO 200,000 OF THE 700,000 EAST TIMORESE HAVE DIED SINCE THE 1975 CONQUEST AND SUBSEQUENT OCCUPATION.

WE HERE HAVE ALL HEARD THE REPORTS OF MURDER, TORTURE, FORCED RELOCATION, THE RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT, AND DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL. THE CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC OPPRESSION DIRECTED AT OBLITERATING THE LIFESTYLES OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF EAST TIMOR HAVE BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED. INDEED, DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT TO BUILD A WALL AROUND THE EVIDENCE OF THEIR VIOLENT OCCUPATION, REPUTABLE GROUPS AND AGENCIES CONTINUE TO DOCUMENT A CLEAR PICTURE OF A PEOPLE BEING SUBJUGATED AGAINST THEIR WILL.

YET WHY HAVE MEMBERS OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY, ESPECIALLY THE GOVERNMENTS AND THE NEWS MEDIA OF THE WESTERN DEMOCRACIES, REMAINED SO SILENT FOR SO LONG IN THE FACE OF SUCH INJUSTICE? THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT CLAIMS THAT THE PEOPLE OF EAST TIMOR HAVE EXPRESSED A WISH TO BE INCORPORATED AS PART OF INDONESIA. IF THIS WERE EVEN REMOTELY TRUE, IT SURELY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN NECESSARY FOR THE INDONESIAN MILITARY TO RESORT TO SUCH VIOLENCE.

IF THE WORLD COMMUNITY EVER REQUIRED ANY PROOF THAT THE PEOPLE OF EAST TIMOR STILL DESIRE THE CHANCE TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN DESTINY, IT IS IN THEIR CONTINUED ARMED AND NON-ARMED RESISTANCE, WHICH REQUIRES SUCH AN EXTENSIVE ARMED OCCUPATION BY INDONESIA EVEN AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS.

THE 1960 UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IS CLEAR BOTH IN ITS SPIRIT AND IN ITS INTENT. THE CONDITIONS AND PROCESS FOR DECOLONIZATION IN FORMER POSSESSIONS IS DETAILED. YET, INDONESIA, AS A MEMBER OF THE UNITED NATIONS, HAS VIOLATED THIS DECLARATION IN ALMOST EVERY WAY POSSIBLE.

THE PEOPLE OF EAST TIMOR HAVE BEEN DENIED, IN THE MOST HARSH AND REPRESSIVE MANNER, THEIR RIGHT TO SELF DETERMINATION AS COMMONLY UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED BY THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD. THE CONTINUED OCCUPATION OF EAST TIMOR IS MORALLY AND LEGALLY ILLEGITIMATE BY THESE STANDARDS.

THEREFORE, THE QUESTION REMAINS WHY SO MANY COUNTRIES, LIKE CANADA, HAVE REMAINED SILENT ON THIS ISSUE TO THE POINT WHERE THEY MUST BE CONSIDERED AS COMPLICIT IN THE OPPRESSION OF THE EAST TIMORESE PEOPLE.

FIRST OF ALL, DESPITE THE SCALE OF THE TRAGEDY THERE, TOO FEW PEOPLE IN THE WORLD ARE AWARE OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN EAST TIMOR. THE CURTAIN OF SILENCE AND THE PASSAGE OF TIME HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE IN DIVERTING MASS ATTENTION FROM THIS ISSUE, EVEN IN THIS SO-CALLED INFORMATION AGE.

SECONDLY, WITHOUT THE PRESSURE GENERATED BY HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS AND THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, IT HAS BEEN ALL TOO EASY FOR ECONOMIC AND GEOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS TO TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER THE HUMAN AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, AND EVEN THE LIVES OF THE EAST TIMORESE.

CERTAINLY, THE RECORD OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA IN THIS REGARD HAS BEEN VERY DISAPPOINTING OVER THE YEARS. MY COUNTRY HAS VOTED AGAINST RESOLUTIONS IN THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY WHICH AFFIRM THE RIGHT OF SELF DETERMINATION FOR EAST TIMOR. IT HAS ALSO ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNED TO HAVE THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS REMOVED FROM THE AGENDA OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. THIS FROM A COUNTRY WHICH PRIDES ITSELF ON ITS ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND ITS STRONG AFFIRMATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGHOUT THE GLOBE.

IN ITS TACIT ACCEPTANCE OF THE INDONESIAN OCCUPATION OF EAST TIMOR, THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT HAS ATTEMPTED TO PRESERVE ITS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT. IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT CANADA IS THE THIRD LARGEST FOREIGN INVESTOR AND A MAJOR TRADING PARTNER OF THAT COUNTRY.

IN GENERAL, WESTERN GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN ONLY TOO HAPPY TO SELL ARMS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDONESIA, TO LOAN IT MONEY. THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THESE FUNDS AND THESE WEAPONS HAVE ASSISTED INDONESIA TO MAINTAIN THE MILITARY OCCUPATION OF EAST TIMOR.

THEREFORE, THIS COMMITTEE HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN NOT ONLY DEALING WITH THE PARTIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED, BUT ALSO IN REMINDING THOSE COUNTRIES WHO HAVE SILENTLY ACQUIESCED TO THE OCCUPATION THAT IF CYNICAL GEOPOLITICS ARE ALLOWED TO TAKE PRECEDENCE WHEN IT IS CONVENIENT, THE RESULT IS THE UNDERMINING OF THE WHOLE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND ALL IT STANDS FOR. THE WORLD COMMUNITY MUST HOLD THEM TO ACCOUNT.

IN THIS CONTEXT, I MIGHT ADD THAT WHILE THE COLONIALIST SYSTEM HAS BEEN LARGELY DISMANTLED, THE SPIRIT OF COLONIALISM LIVES ON AROUND THE WORLD. THE SAME FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO SELF DETERMINATION WHICH WAS WAGED BY THE FORMER COLONIES IS STILL BEING CARRIED ON BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AROUND THE WORLD.

A LARGE NUMBER OF MY OWN CONSTITUENTS ARE ABORIGINAL CANADIANS, AND I CAN SEE SOME INSTRUCTIVE PARALLELS BETWEEN THEIR SITUATION AND THAT OF THE TIMORESE. THE ATTITUDE THAT THE LIVES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ARE LESS VALID THAN THOSE OF MORE TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED PEOPLES THAT WE SEE SO CLEARLY IN EAST TIMOR HAS BEEN EVIDENT IN CANADA AND IN OTHER PARTS OF THE AMERICAS.

THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE HAS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THAT POLICIES WHICH ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE A WAY OF LIFE ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, EVEN WHEN THOSE POLICIES ARE RELATIVELY HUMANE AND WELL-INTENTIONED, ARE LARGELY DOOMED IF THEY DO NOT INVOLVE THE ACTIVE UNDERSTANDING, CONSENT AND PARTICIPATION OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THEMSELVES. THE RESULT IS GENERATIONS OF FRUSTRATION AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISINTEGRATION WHICH DESTROY EVEN THE BEST OF GOALS ENVISIONED BY THOSE POLICIES.

I KNOW THAT MANY CANADIANS ARE ALSO BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT OUR COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FIRST PEOPLES OF CANADA HAS BEEN EXPRESSED IN THE MISUSE AND DEGRADATION OF THE LAND. WE AND THE INDUSTRIAL WORLD HAVE MUCH TO LEARN FROM THE REMAINING TRIBAL PEOPLES OF THE WORLD ABOUT LIVING IN A SUSTAINABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR PLANET. WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO SURVIVE IF WE DO NOT.

THE AFFIRMATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE EAST TIMORESE IS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN RECOGNIZING THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL PEOPLES ALL OVER THE WORLD TO SOME CONTROL OVER THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. THE WORLD IS GOING TO HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THAT WE CAN NO LONGER DISPLACE OR ELIMINATE TRIBAL PEOPLES JUST TO GET ACCESS TO THEIR RESOURCES. THE SPIRIT OF COLONIALISM WILL LIVE ON SO LONG AS HUMANITY CONTINUES TO SUBORDINATE VALUES SUCH AS THE BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS OF OTHERS AND THE NEED TO PRESERVE OUR ENVIRONMENT IN FAVOUR OF MATERIALISM AND ECONOMIC GAIN.

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR DESIRE FOR FREEDOM AND SELF DETERMINATION. WE HAVE SEEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE IN EASTERN EUROPE, ASIA AND IN SOUTH AFRICA. YET THE CONTINUING SHAME OF EAST TIMOR REMINDS US OF HOW FAR WE HAVE YET TO GO.

THERE HAVE BEEN RECENT PRESS REPORTS THAT THE INDONESIAN MILITARY HAS RECENTLY BEGUN A CAMPAIGN OF REPRESSION AND KILLING, AIMED AT INTIMIDATING THE TIMORESE PEOPLE BEFORE THE VISIT OF A GROUP OF PORTUGUESE PARLIAMENTARIANS THIS FALL.

IT IS HARD TO SEE HOW THE TIMORESE CAN SURVIVE AS A PEOPLE UNDER THIS CONTINUAL CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE. INDEED, THE WORLD COMMUNITY MAY NOT HAVE ANOTHER 15 YEARS TO WASTE IN ORDER TO REDRESS THEIR CLAIM.

THIS BEING THE CASE, I BELIEVE, AND MY CANADIAN COLLEAGUES IN PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR EAST TIMOR BELIEVE, THAT IT IS TIME THAT THE UNITED NATIONS CARRIED OUT ITS MANDATE AS IT IS EXPRESSED IN RESOLUTION 1514 WITH ALL POSSIBLE SPEED. THE DRAMATIC WORDS OF THE UN CHARTER WHICH SO ELOQUENTLY ARTICULATE THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE EARTH MUST RESULT IN CONCRETE ACTION ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF EAST TIMOR.

THEREFORE, WE BELIEVE THAT IT BEHOOVES THIS COMMITTEE, AND THE MEMBER NATIONS OF THE UN, INCLUDING CANADA, TO WORK QUICKLY TO REALIZE THE WITHDRAWAL OF INDONESIAN FORCES FROM EAST TIMOR FOLLOWED BY A FREE, OPEN REFERENDUM IN WHICH THE EAST TIMORESE PEOPLE CAN DECIDE THEIR OWN FUTURE.

A MINIMUM PROGRAM OF ACTION WHICH COULD LEAD TO THIS OBJECTIVE MIGHT INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

1) THE INSISTENCE THAT INDONESIA GRANT FULL, ABSOLUTE AND UNCONDITIONAL ACCESS TO BOTH OFFICIAL AND NON-GOVERNMENT HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN GROUPS WISHING TO MAKE INDEPENDENT EVALUATIONS OF THE HISTORY AND CURRENT STATUS OF THE INDONESIAN PRESENCE IN EAST TIMOR. THIS IS IN FACT AN ESSENTIAL FIRST ELEMENT IN ANY PLAN WHICH MIGHT BE ADOPTED.

2) UNITED NATIONS SPONSORSHIP OF TALKS AIMED AT ESTABLISHING A MECHANISM WHEREBY THE PEOPLE OF EAST TIMOR CAN FREELY EXPRESS THEIR WILL. THESE TALKS MUST INCLUDE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF EAST TIMOR, AS WELL AS INDONESIA AND PORTUGAL. THE RECENT U.N. SPONSORED DISCUSSIONS WITH REGARD TO DETERMINING THE FUTURE OF THE WESTERN SAHARA MIGHT SERVE AS A MODEL FOR THESE DISCUSSIONS.

3) UNITED NATIONS SUPERVISION OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN EAST TIMOR TO ENSURE THAT IT IS FREE, OPEN AND NOT SUBJECT TO OUTSIDE INTIMIDATION.

IN THE LAST YEAR, THE MEMBERS OF THE CANADIAN CHAPTER OF PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR EAST TIMOR HAVE WORKED TO RAISE THE ISSUE OF THE OCCUPATION OF EAST TIMOR IN OUR PARLIAMENT, AS i KNOW OUR COLLEAGUES ELSEWHERE ARE DOING IN THEIR OWN LEGISLATURES. WE PLAN TO PURSUE THE ISSUE WITH RENEWED VIGOUR. OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE GLOBAL EFFORT TO REALIZE JUSTICE IN EAST TIMOR BY REVERSING OUR OWN COUNTRY'S UNTENABLE AND HYPOCRITICAL STANCE.

IN CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO AGAIN THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THIS PRESENTATION. I HOPE YOUR DELIBERATIONS ARE FRUITFUL ONES, AND THAT WHEN THIS COMMITTEE NEXT MEETS, CONCRETE PROGRESS TOWARDS SELF DETERMINATION FOR EAST TIMOR WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE.